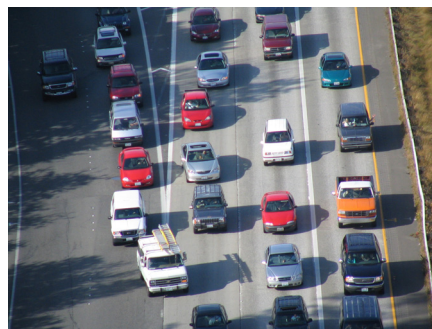


CHAPTER 2

Why do we need the project?

In 2002, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) prepared an environmental impact statement (EIS) to provide a corridor-wide review of a range of transportation improvement alternatives along I-405. That process led to the selection of an alternative that became the I-405 Corridor Program. The Renton to Bellevue Project proposes a focused strategy to improve the section of the corridor beginning at SR 169 and continuing through the northern on- and off-ramps of the I-90 interchange.



Typical traffic in the project area

Why do we need the Renton to Bellevue Project?

Our region needs the Renton to Bellevue Project to improve personal and freight mobility and to reduce traffic congestion in ways that are safe and reliable. Anyone who has traveled on I-405 through the project area already knows how congested this stretch of road has become. On an average morning, motorists and transit users currently experience northbound traffic congestion between 6:00 and 9:00 AM. The typical northbound morning peak hour has between 4,100 and 5,500 vehicles. Likewise, on a typical afternoon, motorists and transit users experience traffic congestion heading southbound beginning by 3:00 PM and lasting for several hours. Currently, the southbound evening traffic congestion is slightly less than northbound morning congestion. The freeway carries up to 5,000 vehicles in each direction during the evening peak hour.

What is the I-405 Corridor Program and how does the Renton to Bellevue Project fit in?

The I-405 Corridor Program was created as a comprehensive strategy to reduce congestion and improve mobility throughout the corridor, which begins at the I-5 interchange in the City of Tukwila and extends northward 30 miles to the I-5 interchange in Lynnwood. Its overall purpose is to help to create an efficient, integrated, and multimodal system of transportation solutions that:

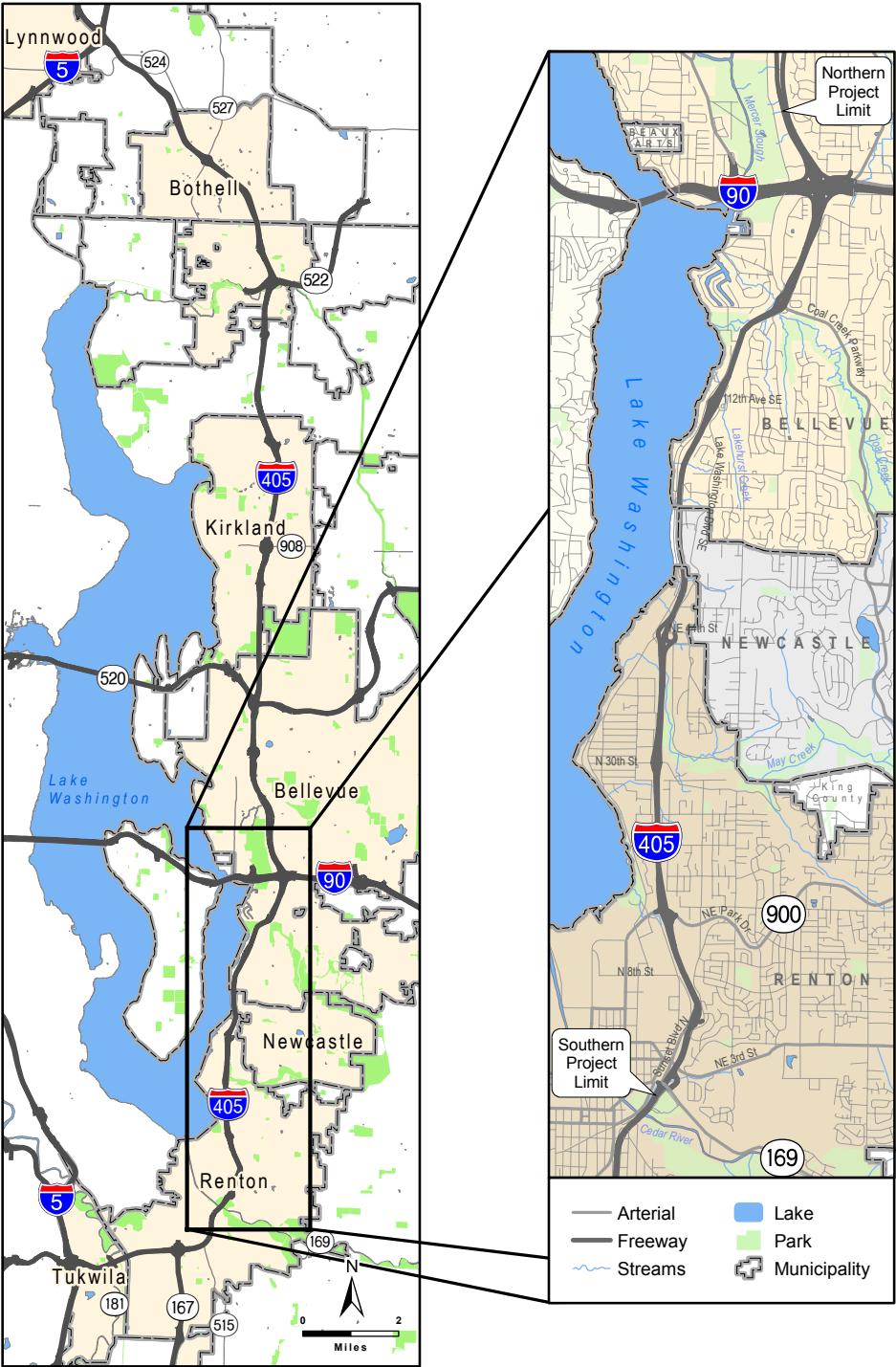
What is congestion?

Congestion occurs when vehicles on the freeway move at an average speed of 45 miles per hour or less, and the flow of traffic is often stop and go.

Where is the Renton to Bellevue Project area?

The Renton to Bellevue Project extends along I-405 for approximately eight miles (milepost 3.8 to milepost 11.9) from SR 169 through the northern on- and off-ramps of the I-90 interchange.

Exhibit 2-1: Project vicinity



- Maintain or enhance livable communities within the corridor;
- Maintain or improve air quality, protect or enhance fish-bearing streams, and promote regional environmental values such as continued integrity of the natural environment;
- Support a vigorous state and regional economy by responding to existing and future travel needs; and
- Accommodate planned regional growth.

The Renton to Bellevue Project is part of the I-405 Corridor Program that proposes to make several major roadway, structural, and transit improvements from SR 169 to the I-90 interchange (see Exhibit 2-1; see also Exhibit 4-2 in Chapter 4).

What happens if the Renton to Bellevue Project is not built?

On a typical weekday, 135,000 vehicles currently travel along the I-405 Corridor in the study area. Half of them travel northbound and half travel southbound. After the project is constructed, our traffic models predict that 188,000 vehicles will travel along this section of the I-405 Corridor in 2014; 212,000 vehicles will travel this section in 2030. If the project is not built, the flow of traffic would be constrained, which means delays would become so great that 42,000 drivers would decide not to use I-405. These drivers would seek alternative routes on the limited number of local and regional roadways, leading to increased cut-through traffic causing additional congestion on those routes, or they may choose to travel by different modes, or forego their trips entirely.

What other improvements are being implemented as part of the region's transportation plans?

WSDOT included improvements along I-405, as well as those on SR 520, I-90, and SR 522, in its *Highway System Plan* (WSDOT, May 18, 2004), which forecasts transportation needs for the next 20 years. *Destination 2030* (Puget Sound Regional Council [PSRC], May 24, 2001; revised May 22, 2003) is the Metropolitan Transportation Plan for the Central Puget Sound region and defines the transportation action plan for the next 30 years. The Renton to Bellevue Project is included in *Destination 2030* and is also consistent with the transportation plans for the cities of Renton and Bellevue.

